

**POL 2000H1F: ANCIENT POLITICAL THOUGHT TO THE RISE OF MODERNITY
(Ph.D. core in political theory, part I)**

Fall 2023

**Course meeting time: Wednesdays, 3-6 pm
Sidney Smith 3130**

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We will spend one to two weeks apiece on major works of ancient and early modern political theory. The course presupposes some familiarity with these theorists. By the time of class on a given theorist you will be expected to have read all of their work that is under consideration in the course. This will enable us to consider the relationship between earlier and later parts of a work, or in some cases relationships among different works, in addressing questions of interpretation.

Requirements:

1. Six short papers (**maximum one page – single spaced, 12-point type, one-inch margins**). On the first day of class, we will divide you into two groups (A and B) and you will write a response for the weeks marked for your group.

Completion of these papers is worth **10 percent of the final grade**.

We will provide three sets of questions to guide each week's discussion, and each short paper should respond to one of the sets of questions for the class in which the paper is submitted. Your papers should not attempt to develop an argument in detail. Rather you should provide a summary statement of claims that you are prepared to support with arguments and **explicit references to the text** in class discussion.

The papers must be posted on the class website (on Quercus, under “Discussions”) by **5:00 pm on the Tuesday before class**. They will be graded on a pass/fail basis. **Late papers (i.e., papers submitted after 5:00 pm) will not be accepted**. If you fail to turn in your six papers on time, you will be required to write a five-page makeup paper for each one you have missed. These makeup papers will also be graded on a pass/fail basis.

2. Active and informed participation in class discussion (including familiarity with your colleagues' short papers): **20 percent of the final grade**. Regardless of whether you have written a paper or not, you should come prepared to discuss the week's questions and you should have read carefully the comments of your fellow students.

3. One 15-page paper on a topic of your choice dealing with the theorists from the term. The paper may either analyse one theorist or compare two of them. The paper is worth **70 percent of the final grade** and is **due on December 13**. Please submit your papers electronically as a PDF via Quercus under “Assignments”.

Academic honesty clause: “Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to the University’s plagiarism detection tool website for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their material to be included as source documents in the University’s plagiarism detection tool reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the University’s plagiarism detection tool service are described on the company web site.”

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 13:	Introduction to the course Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books 1-5
September 20:	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books 6-10
September 27:	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>
October 4:	Machiavelli, <i>The Prince</i> and selections from the <i>Discourses</i> .
October 11:	Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> , Parts I and II; and "A Review and Conclusion."
October 18:	1. Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , Preface – Chapter 5 2. Locke, <i>First Treatise</i> , Chapters 1 - 6
October 25:	Locke, <i>Second Treatise</i> , Chapters 6 – 19
November 1:	1. Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality</i> 2. Adam Smith, “Letter to the Edinburgh Review,” in <i>The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith, Vol. 3, Essays on philosophical subjects</i> eds. D. Stewart et al. (Oxford University Press, 1980). 3. Adam Smith, <i>An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations</i> , 2 vols., ed. E. Cannan et al. (UChicago Press, 1976), Book I, Ch. 1-2, 8, and 10 (part 1); Book III, Ch. 1; and Book V, Ch. 1 (excerpt, pp. 302-306); <i>Recommended but not required</i> : Book IV.
November 8:	Reading week. No class
November 15:	1. Bernard Mandeville, <i>The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits, Vol. 1</i> , ed. F.B. Kaye (Oxford University Press, 2014), “Preface,”

“The Grumbling Hive,” “Introduction,” “Enquiry into the Origins of Moral Virtues,” “Remark C,” “Remark G,” “Remark M,” and “Remark Q.”
2. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. K. Haakonssen (Cambridge University Press, 2002) Part I, Sections 1-2 and Section 3, ch. 2; Part III, ch. 1-4; Part VI, Sections 1-2.

November 22: Rousseau, *The Social Contract*

November 29 1. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford University Press, 2009): pp. 3 – 97 (online version, pp 1-40 of pdf).
2. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*
3. Price, “A Discourse on the Love of Our Country” in *The Vindications*

December 6: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEXTS (Editions we have ordered from the University of Toronto Bookstore are marked with *):

Plato, *Republic*, trans. G. Grube revised by C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett) *

Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C. Lord (Chicago)*

Niccolò Machiavelli, *Selected Political Writings: The Prince* and Selections from the *Discourses*, ed. D. Wootton, (Hackett)*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Macpherson (Penguin), Oakeshott (Collier), Schneider (Bobbs-Merrill), Tuck (Cambridge), or Curley (Hackett)*

John Locke, *Political Writings*, ed. D. Wootton (Hackett)*; *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. P. Laslett (Cambridge)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Major Political Writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, J.T. Scott (Chicago)* or *Discourse on Inequality (Second Discourse)*, ed. V. Gourevitch (Cambridge), and *On the Social Contract*, V. Gourevitch (Cambridge) or *The Basic Political Writings*, tr. Cress (Hackett)

Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Vindications* eds. Macdonald and Scherf (Broadview)* or *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints*, ed. S. Tomaselli (Cambridge)

QUESTIONS FOR SHORT PAPERS AND CLASS DISCUSSION:

PLATO

September 13

1. Before outlining a novel theory of justice, Socrates first must contend with other, rival theories of justice. What theories are offered by Thrasymachus and Glaucon? What is at the heart of the challenges posed by these characters? How does Glaucon's theory of justice contrast with the one proposed by Socrates? Do you want to be just and, if so, why? How does your answer relate to the ones offered in this exchange?
2. Why is the *Republic* written as a dialogue? How, and where, should the fact that it is written as one affect our reading of it? (Give concrete examples.) Analytic philosophers often ignore the dialogue and analyse Socrates' position as the one to be taken seriously and/or as representing Plato's own view. What, if anything, would be lost by doing so?
3. The discussions of women and the family in the *Republic* have given rise to many different interpretations. What is yours? Does Socrates (and/or Plato) ultimately advocate a radical alteration in family structure, or does he intend this example as instructive in other ways? Do we have anything to learn today from Plato on these matters? Support your views with explicit references to the text.

September 20:

1. What is the character of Plato's utopianism? Is the *kallipolis* intended to embody an ideal which human beings can and ought to try to approximate? Is it rather an unattainable standard intended to criticize the project of utopianism altogether? Or, something different again, is it a hypothetical thought-experiment designed to stimulate readers to think more profoundly about politics, whatever the practical outcomes? On what do you base your answer to this question – the words of Socrates, the literary or dramatic features of the work, or something else?
2. Does Socrates' analogy between the just soul and the just regime (introduced at 368c) work, in your view? Socrates suggests that the "city in speech" is best seen as a model for the well-ordered soul, not as a political ideal. Does this analogy between regimes and souls as it plays out in Books VIII & IX yield any useful or important political insights?
3. Is *Republic* best read as a rejection of Athenian democracy, or does it have a more ambivalent relationship to the regime and its culture (e.g., theatre, education, and rhetoric)?

ARISTOTLE

September 27:

1. What does Aristotle mean by claiming that “by nature the human being is a political animal?” What methodological commitments follow from this starting premise? Do you find his approach more or less compelling than Plato’s for the study of politics?
2. Two of the aspects of Aristotle’s thought that appear least congenial to contemporary readers are his discussions of women and slavery. What does he have to say about each and how integral are these accounts to his overall political philosophy? What do these figures show us about the place of the household economy in the *polis*?
3. What does Aristotle think good citizenship demands? Are his expectations compatible with contemporary politics? Do they pose challenges to contemporary assumptions about the obligations of individuals and politics?

MACHIAVELLI

October 4:

1. What does Machiavelli mean by *virtù*? Discuss the similarities and differences among the historical figures whom Machiavelli cites as examples of *virtù* or as men lacking crucial elements of *virtù*. What do you find most puzzling and what most illuminating in his discussion of these figures?
2. Many readers interpret Machiavelli as a theorist of human agency, first and foremost. How, then, do we make sense of the significant role that fortune plays in his accounts of politics?
3. What is the relationship between morality and politics in Machiavelli’s thought? Does he advance the view that “the end justifies the means”? If so, what is the end and how is it justified?

HOBBS

October 11:

1. Before he presents his theory of the social contract, Hobbes offers a psychological account, giving lengthy consideration to the body, the imagination, and language. Why does Hobbes’s theory of sovereignty and obligation depend on these principles of moral

and natural philosophy? Could one consistently be a political Hobbiist while rejecting Hobbes' science and/or psychology?

2. Hobbes is famous as the founder of the social contract tradition. But is consent really relevant in Hobbes' thought? What makes political authority legitimate in Hobbes' view? Is his account coherent?
3. Do members of a Hobbesian commonwealth have individual rights? Can they legitimately resist political authority?

LOCKE

October 18 (*First and Second Treatises*)

1. In the state of nature, property claims require that people leave "enough and as good" for others to use. Would this be preferable to a civil society in which property distribution is starkly unequal? Does Locke justify extreme economic inequality, or does his theory offer resources for mitigating it within a polity?
2. Locke's theory has been denounced in recent years for being a justification of dispossession of Indigenous people in North America. How does this reading of chapter 5 alter or affect your assessment of other parts of Locke's theory (e.g., natural rights, consent, rule of law)?
3. If Locke takes pains to distinguish familial authority from political authority, why does he spend so much time talking about the family in his political treatises?

October 25 (*Second Treatise, continued*)

1. If we read Locke as a theorist who deeply values "settled standing laws," why does he theorize spaces of political power beyond the written law (e.g., prerogative)?
2. How do you know when and under what circumstances it is justified to resist governmental authority? How might different figures in Locke's theory answer this question (e.g., the citizen, the thief, the North American Indian, the pauper)?
3. Between Hobbes and Locke, which thinker affords a greater place to violence? Does granting more scope to the role of violence in politics make one a better political theorist?

ROUSSEAU I

November 1:

1. According to the *Discourse on Inequality*, in what ways and to what extent can nature provide a guide to politics? For example, does nature prescribe anything with regard to relations between men and women? As another example, what, if anything, might nature prescribe regarding how we should alter the distribution and management of goods, land, and other forms of wealth?
2. Some scholars have interpreted *The Wealth of Nations* as a direct response to Rousseau's account of the development of civilization in the *Discourse on Inequality*. How does Smith's account of civilizational progress challenge Rousseau's narrative? Does he concede any of Rousseau's points, and what do these concessions tell us about the effectiveness of Rousseau's critiques /or the effectiveness of Smith's analysis?
3. Some readers of *The Wealth of Nations* have argued that Smith's greatest contribution to 18th-century social political thought was enacting a sea change in how poor people were figured and analysed in the political context of a wealthy nation. Consider Smith's descriptions of poor labourers. Do his representations of these workers, and the rhetorical moves he makes in service of these representations, warrant reading Smith as a radical egalitarian, or should we interpret his work in some other way?

NOVEMBER 8: U OF T READING WEEK—NO CLASS.

SMITH AND MANDEVILLE

November 15:

1. Mandeville is considered one of the great satirists of 18th-century political thought. How do his stylistic choices obscure or illuminate the significance of the claims he makes about the society he observes (e.g., the relationship between prosperity and vice, gender politics, the place of hypocrisy in political life)?
2. Both Mandeville and Smith have been characterized as theorists of “spontaneous order”—the idea that customs, practices, and institutions are often the unintended consequences of the actions of many individuals. Is this an apt reading of their work? If so, what role, if any, does human agency play in their political theories?
3. What is the scope of a Smithian politics of sympathy? Does it have to be a local politics, or can it be stretched to include distant others?

ROUSSEAU II

November 22:

1. What is the general will? Does this concept provide any illumination in thinking about politics? Why or why not? Is the general will compatible with individual freedoms of speech, of association, of religion, and of property ownership? Is it compatible with an appreciation of individual and social diversity?
2. Does Rousseau offer any inspiration for contemporary democratic thought, or does his project muddle and undermine the task of pursuing just and workable democratic institutions?
3. Rousseau claims to succeed philosophically where previous social contract theorists have failed to truly understand the origins of political community. Does his formulation of the social contract solve any of the problems that characterize those offered by Hobbes and Locke? Does it introduce new problems?

BURKE AND WOLLSTONECRAFT I

November 29:

1. Burke rejects the rapid political change witnessed during the events in France. As a theorist of conservatism, does he offer an account of political change and criticism? If so, do you find it persuasive? Why or why not?
2. Burke depicts democratic revolutionaries in France as lawless and violent. What does his account tell us, if anything, about the relationship between violence and democratic founding? Is it necessary, avoidable, or probable and why is Burke right or wrong on this question?
3. Both Burke and Wollstonecraft see property and familial relations as important dimensions of political life. If Burke sees the need to preserve both traditional familial authority and property relations, what kind of social relations (familial, economic, etc) does Wollstonecraft seek to transform or eliminate with her criticism of property relations?

WOLLSTONECRAFT II

December 6:

1. Does Wollstonecraft primarily seek changes for the status of women, or does she advocate changes to social and political life for both men and women? What turns on your answer?
2. The *Vindication* has been variously cast as liberal, socialist, republican, feminist, or even occasionally misogynist. How would you classify Wollstonecraft's political commitments?
3. Early attacks on Wollstonecraft portrayed it as immoral and dangerous, effectively excluding it from serious consideration as a work of political theory until the late twentieth century. To what values or principles might Wollstonecraft be considered threatening? To what extent can we draw from this instance general lessons about what should be considered valuable or respectable political theory?